**Southwest Colorado Council of Governments**

**December Board Meeting**

**Friday, 4 December 2015, 1:30pm**

**1188 E. 2nd Ave., Carnegie Building, Durango, CO 81301**

Board in Attendance:

Dick White - City of Durango

Michael Whiting - Archuleta County

Michelle Nelson - Town of Bayfield

Julie Westendorff - La Plata County

Andrea Phillips - Town of Mancos

Greg Schulte - Town of Pagosa Springs

John Egan - Town of Pagosa Springs

Chris LaMay - Town of Bayfield

Shane Hale - City of Cortez (by phone)

Ernie Williams - Dolores County (by phone)

Staff in Attendance:

Miriam Gillow-Wiles – COG Executive Director

Sara Trujillo – COG Assistant/Accountant (by phone)

Jessica Laitsch – COG Assistant

Shannon Cramer – COG AmeriCorp VISTA

Others in Attendance:

Sherri Dugdale - City of Durango

**I. Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 1:45 p.m.

**II. 2016 Budget Adoption Hearing**

Miriam Gillow-Wiles described the changes that have been made since the preliminary budget.

Dick White opened the public hearing. No members of the public wished to speak. Dick closed the public hearing.

Dick asked how the projection for the COG member grant match was determined. Miriam replied that this is the broadband grant match. Dick asked how the restricted fiber replacement fund will be managed. Miriam replied that this will be held in a separate, restricted bank account. Sara Trujillo added that this is shown in revenues and expenditures to account for it. Dick suggested working with the auditors to clarify how to handle this.

**Michael Whiting motioned to approve the 2016 Southwest Colorado Council of Governments Budget, John Egan seconded, unanimously approved.**

**III. Consent Agenda**

Dick stated that there were a couple minor typos. Michael stated that he will abstain. Dick suggested that only the executive committee members vote on the minutes for those meetings.

a. November 5, 2015 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

b. November 6, 2015 COG Board Meeting Minutes

c. November 6, 2015 Broadband Meeting Minutes

d. November 19, 2015 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

e. October 2015 Financials

**Julie Westendorff motioned to approve the executive committee meeting minutes of November 5 and November 19, Andrea Phillips seconded, unanimously approved.**

**John Egan motioned to approve the remaining items on the consent agenda, Andrea Phillips seconded, unanimously approved with Michael Whiting abstaining.**

**IV. Discussion Items**

a. 4CORE Discussion

Miriam Gillow-Wiles described the background for this request.

Michael asked why only two counties are involved. Miriam replied that LPEA only serves two counties, so only those two are involved. Dick added the original intent was to be a broader regional organization; however, initial funding opportunities are no longer available, community support has decreased and the organization is now facing funding challenges. He described some benefits to bringing the organization under the COG, although this may not be beneficial overall. Michael asked for clarification on the annual funding. There was discussion about the financial information included. Julie asked what the original intent of the organization was. She explained the value gained by La Plata County from 4CORE and how it could be beneficial for the COG to take this on, while recognizing the challenges with integrating this particular organization. Ernie Williams expressed concern about the financial ramifications and limited benefit for Dolores County. John suggested having a representative of 4CORE speak with the board. Julie suggested more work on this prior to board action. Michelle Nelson asked how this could reduce dues considering the anticipated increased costs to take this on. She added that the actual benefit would need to be demonstrated. Michael added that their net assets are dramatically dropping, which is concerning. He agreed that there would need to be a real benefit to the COG. Dick noted that there were salary savings in 2015. He asked if the board wants to spend the time to explore this possibility. Julie replied that she would support devoting a limited amount of time to explore this without forcing a solution. Chris La May asked how integration would look with respect to staffing. Miriam replied that they currently have two part-time staff who run the programs. Michael stated that their funding seems uncertain and should not be saved at the expense of the COG, but could be considered if it shows value and can benefit the COG.

**John Egan motioned that the Chair and Executive Director meet with 4CORE to explore viable options for the COG.** Miriam mentioned that it would be useful to have a committee to explore this. There was discussion about setting up a committee to look into this possibility. Dick, Julie, and Michael agreed to participate on such a committee. Dick summarized that the motion would be to set up an ad-hoc committee to meet with 4CORE and explore possible solutions. **Michael Whiting seconded, unanimously approved.**

b. Broadband Planning Grant Match Update

Miriam explained that the amount has been reduced since originally discussed due to Region 9’s support. She added that this will be invoiced in 2016.

**V. Reports**

a. Director’s Report

Dick explained that during the executive committee they had discussed moving the director’s report sooner in the meetings to ensure the board is fully informed.

* Miriam reported that the COG is moving forward with broadband. She explained that a better understanding of the SCAN network will be necessary in order to move forward and this will be added to the scope of work for the broadband planning process.
* Staff is working on shared services. One example is an arrangement with Southwest Community College to get reduced cost CDL training in exchange for upfront financial assistance.
* There had been a meeting with CenturyLink, and they will be back early next year with more detail about their plan. Julie mentioned that in other areas where CenturyLink has expanded, the service levels were minimal. Miriam replied with history about the lawsuit related to the high-cost telephony fund. Chris pointed out that one of the restrictions for using the funds is whether cable service is available, which limits this to be a very rural project. Dick replied that the funds are for reaching unserved populations. Michael expressed concern about the actual benefits communities could expect to see. There was general discussion about the status of broadband and working with CenturyLink.

b. Broadband Report

* Miriam mentioned changes to the proposed expenses for the Broadband Planning Grant.

c. Transportation Report

* Sara reported that the TPR meeting had been earlier in the day.
* Chris reported on the reallocation of funds from the US 550 gap project to the US 160 Dry Creek project due to compelling evidence from CDOT about safety issues. There was general agreement that the reallocation was a good decision.
* Miriam reported that the Transit Council is moving forward with bylaws and more structure.

d. VISTA’s Report (Includes Shared Services)

* Shannon reported that the best option for smaller entities may be to partner with the state for purchasing of office supplies. Dick expressed support for working to determine what is best for the communities collectively. Chris asked if the contract would be set up with the COG. Miriam replied that there are a couple options for how it could be set up. There was discussion about responsiveness when seeking information from organizations.

**VI. Decision Items**

a. Fund Balance Policy

Miriam explained that this is the first draft of a fund balance policy. Chris asked if there should be a statements about TABOR included. Miriam replied that she would check with legal. There was discussion about how the COG is classified by the state and what the implications would be if TABOR were to apply.

**Michael Whiting motioned to approve the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments Fund Balance Policy pending the potential addition of TABOR language. Andrea Phillips seconded, unanimously approved.**

b. 2016 Board Meeting Dates

Dick explained the schedule conflicts throughout 2016. Miriam mentioned that historically they have skipped the July meeting.

**Ernie Williams motioned to meet on the second Friday of January, July and September. Julie Westendorff seconded, unanimously approved.**

c. 2016 Executive Committee – Treasurer Selection

Dick explained that the Executive Committee recommends that Andrea progress to be chair, Julie to be vice-chair and that John Egan agreed to serve as Treasurer. He elaborated that the consensus had been to have representation from diverse geographic regions.

**Michelle Nelson motioned to appoint John Egan from Pagosa Springs to the Treasurer position, and Andrea Phillips from Mancos as Chair, and Julie Westendorff from La Plata County as Vice-chair. Michael Whiting seconded, unanimously approved.**

d. 2016 Executive Director Pay

Dick presented the Executive Committee’s review of the Executive Director.

**Michael Whiting motioned to accept the recommendation of the Executive Committee to increase the salary of the Executive Director by 4%. John Egan seconded, unanimously approved.**

**VII. Other Reports**

a. Community Updates

Andrea Phillips reported that the Town of Mancos is seeking a new Town Marshall and in the meantime will be working with the Montezuma County Sheriff’s Office to assist with shifts. She reported that a Town Trustee member recently passed away. She added that in April the mayor as well as five trustee positions will be open. Additionally, the water system improvement project is wrapping up and they will be looking at additional improvements to the water system in 2016, specifically reconstruction of PRV station and head gates as well as replacement of some old distribution lines.

Michelle Nelson reported that the Bayfield football team won the state championship. She reported that the sales tax increase passed. She explained the town is beginning to have panhandler issues and are beginning to work with the attorney and Town Marshal to determine what to do. She explained that the town does not have social services and they are trying to determine how to move forward. Andrea mentioned that the Town of Mancos also doesn’t have services available. John added that the Town of Pagosa Springs has also had issues with panhandlers and they have limited services available. He suggested that the Archuleta County Commissioners plan a visit to Manna Soup Kitchen. Dick mentioned that the City of Durango changed their ordinance to comply with new rulings. There was discussion about the legalities surrounding panhandlers and available resources for people. Andrea suggested having a discussion to share resources pertaining to panhandlers at a future COG meeting. There was discussion about options for how to set up such a discussion, such as meeting with Manna Soup Kitchen or the local homeless shelters.

Julie pointed out that the bus rollover resulting from a narrow road occurred very soon after La Plata County’s road and bridge property tax increase failed.

John reported that the Town of Pagosa Springs passed the 2016 budget; tax revenues are up and the economy has remained robust into the winter. He added that the Town will be looking to fund the Eighth Street repaving project. He mentioned that the town and county are building a much stronger working relationship.

Michael reported that Archuleta County’s jail flooded and they have hired a facilities planner and an architect to determine needs and the costs they will be facing. He mentioned that a joint geothermal project with the Town of Pagosa Springs is currently on hold. He reported that the town and county recently met to discuss joint strategic priorities and identified economic vitality as the top priority with efforts focused on early childhood education and daycare, housing, and broadband. John mentioned that when leadership works together, staff tends to do the same and collaborate better. Michael added that this shift was intentional. Andrea asked how this had started. Michelle mentioned that La Plata County makes an effort to work with the towns. There was discussion about collaborative efforts in the various communities and the sorts of opportunities that could be possible.

Dick White mentioned the financial concerns related to the improvements at the airport. He reported that the City of Durango will move forward with improvements to the wastewater treatment facility at the current location. He added that the city passed the 2016 budget. Additionally, the city has undertaken a multiyear housing study. Miriam mentioned that the COG contributed to the transit section of the SW Index. Dick reported that the budget also includes a storm water management master plan. He mentioned that the city’s lodger’s tax rate is low compared to other communities. Miriam asked about coordinating with hotels to have they pay into transit and offer service in return. Dick replied this is an element, for example new hotels require space for a transit stop. John mentioned that housing and transit are tied together. There was discussion about how senior issues are also related to transit.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:46 p.m.